

Food and Society

Last Updated: Thu, 01/29/2026

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 2018

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
31640

Instructor First Name: Stephanie

Instructor Last Name: Bryan

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course traces the development of the global industrial food system—from large-scale agriculture to the long-distance supply chains that disconnect modern diets from seasonality and place. We will examine the deep, interdependent relationships between people, food, and the environment. Our work will pay close attention to the power dynamics, politics, class biases, racial associations, and gender formations that have shaped food production and consumption in the United States from colonization to the present. Along the way, we will explore shifting meanings and experiences of food, how knowledge about food is created and circulated, and how social movements have sought to confront systemic inequities within the food system.

Course learning outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- **Explain** how the modern food system developed and transformed over time.
- **Identify and analyze** the relationships between food, race, class, gender, and power across key periods and movements in U.S. history.
- **Interpret and evaluate** primary and secondary sources by situating them in historical context, assessing evidence and arguments, and formulating new, research-driven questions.
- **Communicate effectively** through writing and discussion, participating in scholarly conversations and debates about food, environment, and society.
- **Assess** how environmental, political, and economic forces shape food production, distribution, and consumption.

- **Reflect on and critique** contemporary food system challenges using historical frameworks.

Required course materials:

Readings will be provided on Canvas.

Grading policy:

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 0-59%

Grades will be allocated accordingly:

- Attendance/Participation 10%
- Group Discussion Facilitation 15%
- Reading Takeaways 15%
- In-Class Reflections/Primary Source Analyses 15%
- Food Biography Midterm Essay 20%
- “Off on A Tangent” Final Essay/Presentation 25%

Attendance policy:

Attending class, participating in group discussions, and engaging in class activities are essential to your success and to that of your classmates. You are expected to attend class in person. Not attending a scheduled class in-person results in an absence.

There may be times when you cannot or should not attend class, such as if you are not feeling well, have an interview, or have family responsibilities. Therefore, this course allows 3 absences without penalty, regardless of reason. If you have more than three absences during the semester, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter.

Exceptions are allowed for Institute-approved absences (for example, those documented by the Registrar) and situations such as hospitalization or family emergencies (documented by the Office of the Dean of Students). Your instructor can communicate with you about how to access materials or make up work you may have missed during your absence or suggest ways to participate in class remotely and/or asynchronously. It is the student's responsibility to bring documentation of any such emergency to the instructor's attention as soon as possible.

For More information on Georgia Tech's Policy regarding Student Absence from Class Due to Illness or Personal Emergencies, see: <https://catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student->

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion